

Re: House Bill #6380

March 2, 2011

Dear Members of the Appropriations Committee:

My name is Suzanne Cappiello. I am a teacher of Students with Visual Impairments and an Education Consultant for BESB in their Children's Services Division.

This state and this committee has some very difficult decisions to make regarding the proposed consolidations to state agencies and I understand fully the need for saving our fine state from further debt. Although I understand the need, I am here to state that I am vehemently opposed to HB #6380.

The largest concern I have is for the detrimental decline of services to our fine visually impaired and blind clients of the state of Connecticut. Although services will remain intact for the remainder of this fiscal year, what can be promised to our clients, students, and their families for the following years to come. BESB is one of the oldest agencies serving the blind in the country. The collaboration of the internal divisions of this agency is the secret to the success of BESB. The divisions collaborate on a daily basis to bring smooth transition within services to our students and clients. Presently our clients move smoothly from one division to another successfully solely because we have all our resources under one roof. These resources include: professionals in blindness matters, equipment for children and the agency, a Braille Library, education to school districts and their families by providing in-services at low or no cost to our students, clients, families and Connecticut school districts throughout the state.

Although my position is for BESB to stay in its present location, the ultimate point is that the people, equipment, and many other resources not be divided among different buildings and locations but MUST stay together where ever that resting place will be.

BESB serves a very important role. Our job is to help guide and teach visually impaired and blind individuals to be independent, literate, and fully functioning members of society. At present, we are fully accessible, have a low vision center, a Braille library, equipment such as a Braille embosser for agency use for our students and clients. Each additional embosser that would need to be housed in separate locations would cost an extra \$50,000. Should the agency stay under one roof there would be no need for any additional costs in the relocating efforts.

I respectfully urge you to ponder the possibilities of dividing this agency...lower literacy rates, lower high school graduation rates, and more unemployed blind individuals who make less money than their counterparts.

Please invest in Connecticut's future...let BESB do what they do best...build productive lives for future generations to come.

Thank you for your kind attention and time to his important request.

Respectfully Submitted,

Suzanne Cappiello
Education Consultant (BESB)